

Testimony of James Quick, President, CT State Independent Living Council

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Appropriations Sub-Committee Public Hearing

What is **Independent Living**? The philosophy of **Independent Living** is to promote and insure that individuals with disabilities have their civil and human rights addressed by providing information, resources and services to support living and working in the communities of their choice. **Independent Living** is:

- participating in day-to-day life;
- living where you choose; and
- making decisions that lead to self-determination.

For people with disabilities, barriers to independence can be obvious, such as lack of ramped entrances for people who use wheelchairs or lack of interpreters for the deaf. However, barriers can be less obvious and sometimes even more limiting to the efforts on the part of people with disabilities to live independently, and they are often caused by our misunderstandings and prejudices about disability.

As a result of the community-based services and perseverance of the Centers for Independent Living (CILs), people with disabilities all over Connecticut have established lives of independence. They fulfill many different roles in their communities, from employers and employees to students, athletes, elected officials and the list goes on and on.

Connecticut has five (5) CILs strategically located through the state to provide statewide coverage for the delivery of **Independent Living** core services. The CILs are non-profit organizations, created in the 1980's by people with disabilities seeking full integration into society. Today, the CILs empower people

with practical independent life skills, along with providing peer counseling, information and referral, and individual and systems advocacy.

Governor Rell proposes to eliminate state funding for CILs in the 2010-2011 budget. The bottom line is that CILs provide a cost savings to the state by providing independence to people with disabilities. Eliminating funding for the CILs is not productive and future costs to the state will be far greater. As a result of the state funding, each CIL is able to build upon their core services to provide additional programs like *Money Follows the Person*, *Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRC)*, *Ticket to Work*, and *Connect-ability*, to name a few.

Eliminating state funding would greatly impact the operations of the 5 CILs and could even force closure, which would ultimately jeopardize the above mentioned programs, like *Money Follows the Person*; increase the need for additional services and increase Medicaid costs.